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STANFIELD HALL.

By J. F. SMITH,

Author of "Minnigrey," "Woman and Her Master," &c.



Illustrated by Sir JOHN GILBERT, R.A.
AND OTHER EMINENT ARTISTS.

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VOL. III.

STANFIELD HALL.

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upon, 'the arch-fiend speaks the truth. On earth or in the grave, at the bar of God, or where His justice may condemn me, I must bear witness to it. Concealed in a tree by the Druids' Stone, I heard the promise given.'

"And what dost thou demand?' said Adrian, faintly.

"Lay thy hands upon my head, and breathe the words which give to men the power to consecrate the bread and wine which He I dare not name first gave to His disciples. Do this, and my claim is satisfied.'

"What if I refuse?' said the kingly priest.

"I will crush thy soul from out thy frame, and leave thy perjured carcase on the floor of thine own palace,' replied the fiend, whose eyes sparkled with that strange, unholy light which marks the divinity of hell

"I demand an hour for reflection.'

"An hour be it,' said the demon. 'But think not to elude me; in the centre of the universe I should find thee! One flash of my wing would disperse a million times the number of thy guards. In an hour I will return, that thou mayst fulfil thy promise, or pay the penalty.'

No sooner had the mysterious visitor departed, than Adrian, who had recovered his courage, calmly commanded the prior to take his seat upon the pontifical chair, and casting himself upon his knees before him, commenced, to the terror-stricken priest, a general confession, such as is made by Catholics previous to death. What passed on that fearful occasion can only be known when the archangel's trumpet shall break the seal of death; the confessor never repeated it.

According to the tradition, the absolving words were barely spoken before the fiend again entered the apartment.

"Thy answer, mortal!' he exclaimed.

"Fiend!' said the pontiff, rising with great dignity, 'in my Master's name I defy and spit upon thee. Thinkest thou that He who spurned thee on the Mount will permit his vicar, fallen, frail, erring, human as he is, to worship thee in His glorious name? By my own sentence I deliver my weak body to thy wrath; my soul I trust to my Redeemer's mercy. His justice may punish, but His mercy will not utterly condemn me.'

Scarcely had the words escaped the lips of the august speaker than the demon, extending his long crooked fingers, seized the penitent by the throat. Lightning flashed from his fierce eyes, and a yell, which echoed through the hundred halls of the Vatican, broke from his lips. The prior, half-mad with terror, rushed from the cabinet to summon assistance; when he returned, accompanied by a crowd of prelates and nobles, they found the still warm body of Adrian upon the ground alone, a placid smile upon his features. It was given out that he died of apoplexy. But it was years ere

his successor permitted the witness of his last moments to quit the cell in which he had been confined as a supposed lunatic.

"From that hour," added the narrator, "the spot where the compact took place has been known by the name of the Monk's Stone; and the superstitious peasantry who believe the tale still avoid it."

"By Heavens!" exclaimed Herbert, who had been absorbed in the legend; "but the fire burns there now!"

The Master of Wilton raised his eyes in the direction to which his companion pointed, and saw, to his astonishment, a deep red glare rising from behind a tall pile of granite. Martin had drawn his rein, and stood observing it. In a few minutes they were by his side.

"What seest thou?" demanded the young men.

"Strange forms," replied the huntsman, trembling, "gliding between us and the fire. Why would you tell the tale?"

Their doubts of the real character of the beings were quickly dissipated by a rough voice calling out to them to stand.

Despite their philosophy, the travellers were not a little relieved when they found the sounds were human.

Being well armed, they judged it more prudent to advance than to retreat. They accordingly approached the fire, and were received by half-a-dozen men, whose rough appearance indicated that they belonged to the wandering tribes at that period so common in England—Bohemians or gipsies.

The Master of Wilton and Martin were on the point of coming to blows, when the voice of Herbert astonished them. Dashing past the men, he rode up to the leader of the party, who was standing at a short distance, and gave some token, or whispered some password in his ear.

"Down with your arms," he cried; "they are friends."

After partaking of some wine and provisions, of which the strangers had good store, Herbert informed his friends that as he was now in sure hands, it was unnecessary for them to accompany him further; indeed, that such attendance might rather add to his danger than contribute to his safety.

The Master of Wilton was too well acquainted with the disguises and stratagems which the extraordinary events of the time in which they lived gave birth to, to ask any further questions, and with mutual professions of esteem and friendship the young men parted. Old Martin was charged with a token to his young mistress.

Six days later, when Charles I., surrounded by his loyal nobles, made his solemn entrance into the city of Oxford, a crowd of students, cavaliers, professors, and citizens thronged the streets to witness it. As the long train of dignitaries moved in procession up the High Street, a party of gipsies, despite the efforts of the officers

of the University, moved after them, much to the dissatisfaction of the wives and daughters of the humbler classes, whom they rudely pushed on one side in order not to lose the sight.

Charles, who rode a steed of rare strength and sinew, was clad in complete armour. When his eye glanced over the splendid train by which he was attended, its usual melancholy expression was exchanged for a look of pride; he felt that he was still a monarch. He courteously reined up his horse as the authorities approached, and listened to their loyal addresses, in which the University declared its willingness to surrender its plate to his majesty's use as soon as the royal mint should be established within the walls.

"Pshaw!" muttered Prince Rupert, as he listened to the address. "They know that the dies for striking the coin were all taken when we abandoned York."

For a few moments the monarch seemed at a loss what answer to return, till, casting his eyes round upon the crowd, he discovered the band of gipsies, who had followed so closely on the rear of the procession. A smile passed over his features as he beheld them.

"I accept at once your loyal offer," he replied, extending his hand to touch the mace which the vice-chancellor presented to him. "The royal mint, I am happy to inform you, is already within the walls."

The functionaries and chancellor looked blank. They deemed the presses destroyed or taken at York, and hit on the excuse as a means to save their treasure. As a just punishment for their want of sincerity, they were disappointed.

CHAPTER V.

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.—SHAKESPEARE.

ON hearing that the king had reared his standard at Oxford, the number of Cavaliers who flocked thither allowed Charles greatly to reinforce his cavalry; for the gentlemen were generally well-mounted, and, under the command of his nephew, Prince Rupert (who, however deficient in the sober qualities of a general, possessed those of a dashing cavalry officer in perfection), scoured the country well, visiting Abingdon and Henley, making great booty. Emboldened by success, he ventured to approach the metropolis, and penetrated as far as Staines and Egham. The Parliament and City, although much concerned at these advances, provided with great spirit for their defence. Trenches were dug and ramparts thrown up round the capital; seamen were embarked in small boats, and sent up the river; forces were despatched to seize and fortify Windsor Castle, and the train bands of London, Middlesex, and Surrey kept continually under arms. In the eastern counties the

association which had been mainly organised by Oliver Cromwell was exceedingly formidable. Such was the position of affairs immediately after the battle of Edge Hill.

London was in a ferment; varying news blew hot and cold amongst the citizens; it was alternately rumoured that Essex had wavered, been defeated, or gone over to the king, and that Charles, at the head of the combined armies, was advancing to wreak his vengeance upon the capital.

These rumours were dispersed by the arrival of the general in the neighbourhood, with his army in good condition. Quarters among them about Acton, he himself appeared before Parliament on the 7th November to give an account of his campaign.

Although it was clear to most men that Essex had been far from doing the best that might have been done, the two Houses wisely welcomed him with a vote of thanks, and the Commons presented him with a gift of five thousand pounds.

Scarcely had the earl arrived in the capital, when the king, quitting Oxford, marched upon Reading. Henry Martin, one of the most remarkable men in the House of Commons, who commanded that town for Parliament, finding it untenable with the forces at his disposal, retreated on the king's approach, and fell back upon London. Charles still pursued his triumphant march to Colnbrook, where he was met by the Earl of Northumberland and three members of the House of Commons, who presented a petition for an accommodation, which was graciously received; the monarch declaring, with many protestations, that he was tenderly compassionate of his bleeding people, and desirous of nothing so much as a speedy peace. The deputation retired to London with the king's gracious answer, which was read in both Houses. In it he promised to reside near London till commissioners, who were to be appointed on both sides, should settle existing differences.

Thereupon the Earl of Essex rose and demanded whether hostilities should be suspended. At this period there is little doubt but that he wished to bring about an accommodation with the king. The lobby of the House of Commons was crowded with men, whose stern, anxious visages and sombre attire denoted the party to which they were devoted. Each time the doors were opened to permit the egress of a member, the measured tread of the Puritans suddenly ceased, and they paused like a body of soldiers at the word of command, in the hope of catching the sound of some speaker's voice, or a few stray words, to indicate the progress of the debate. Amongst the crowd was Barford; his wounds were yet green, and his pale cheek showed that he still suffered, though the pains of his body were nothing when compared with the gall, shame, rage, and humiliation which preyed upon his mind. They were like a nest of serpents, engendered both in his

brain and heart. Not being a member of the House, he was compelled, like the rest, to curb his impatience. A hundred times was he tempted to rush into the body of the House, and aid, by his fiery eloquence, the efforts of those whom interest, fanaticism, patriotism, or ambition led to desire the continuance of the war; for in the strife of human passions then let loose, there were men to be found actuated by the noblest and most unworthy motives.

The door of the House was thrust violently open, and Cromwell, Hampden, and Pym entered the lobby. The appearance of the first we have already described; he wore the same dress as at the battle of Edge Hill, with the exception of his arms and armour; these, from the respect due to the sanctuary of the laws, had been laid aside. Hampden wore the uniform of his favourite regiment—the green-coats; and, together with Pym, was endeavouring to allay the excitement of their companion, whose lip was thick and swollen with ill-suppressed passion.

"Calm thee, Oliver," said the philosophic patriot; "anger never yet marred a good cause or advanced a bad one; our liberties are in the hands of God, not at the mercy of the discretion of a Parliament, or the fidelity of a king."

"But why treat at all?" demanded Cromwell, with a violent effort to master himself; "are not the Stuart's perjuries as manifold as the hairs on his dishonoured head? Is not his faith a by-word? The Lord hath given the victory to our hands—why turn it to a defeat?"

"How goes the debate, Master Oliver?" demanded several of the loungers who had crowded round the three members; "the House will stand firm?"

"As a house built on sand," bitterly answered the party thus questioned.

A groan of disappointment arose from the little knot who surrounded them, and several hands were seen impatiently clutching their swords.

"Traitors!" muttered several of the Puritans, alluding, of course, to the members who were disposed to an accommodation.

"Mistaken, perhaps," observed Hampden, "but not traitors."

"Why treat," said Cromwell, "where there is no faith? It is tempting Heaven."

"Why treat!" repeated the patriot, fixing on him a look of surprise, not unmingled with regret. "To stay the shedding of kindred blood, the desolation of so many hearths, the tears of so many orphans, if Charles prove sincere; if not, to give a last proof to the world that we proffered the olive-branch ere we drew the sword."

"It must be drawn," said several of the listeners.

"For our rights—yes; but not for vengeance, friends; for liberty of conscience, but not for private seekings of ambition. If Heaven

hath given a chance of peace, let not man reject it. Should Charles Stuart again break faith, the Lord will raise up an avenger."

"Ay," said Cromwell, breaking into one of his fits of religious enthusiasm—the only occasion, perhaps, on which he was really eloquent—"the avenger is already raised. The shadow of his step is on the earth, albeit men see it not; and the King of Terrors is walking by his side. The race of Stuart is red with the blood of saints. Their throne shall pass from them, and their name become a word of reproach. This regenerated land shall give the world a lesson to its tyrants and an example to its nations. The mystery of Babylon shall bow down before it, and the earth be purified in the presence of the Lord."

At this moment word was brought into the lobby that the House was about to come to a division. Hampden and Pym hastened to their seats, fearful of being shut out. Their companion was about to follow them, when a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder. He turned sharply round.

"What wouldst thou?" he demanded.

"Five words alone."

"It must be at some other hour, then; the present is devoted to the great work to which my soul is bound. Woe to me if I neglect the service of the Lord!"

"Thou canst pay it better than in yon tabernacle," replied Barford, "where the sheep and the wolves are gathered as in one fold. Anon they must be separated. The suspension of hostilities will be carried."

"I know it," replied Oliver; "still will I do my duty."

"I can, if not prevent it, at least so turn this treaty that it shall make the breach wider than ever between Charles Stuart and his people, and cover with confusion the false shepherds who have betrayed their flocks."

"Thy name?" demanded Cromwell, fixing his keen, grey eye with a scrutinising glance upon him.

"Barford."

"He who lately sacked and burnt Keinton Manor?"

The tempter bowed in the affirmative.

"Enough—I will trust thee," said the future Protector. "That act was a pledge which bound thee to the people's cause; and it is not the time," he added, "when patriots are wanted to scan too curiously the motive. Walk with me this way."

With a strong heavy stride, the speaker, followed by Barford, made his way through the crowd of Puritans in the lobby—pushing some gently on one side, or answering others with a groan, which meant to convey that the good cause was in danger from the backsliding of the Parliament. They reached at last an empty committee-room, where they could converse freely and unobserved. No sooner were they seated than the manner of Oliver entirely

changed. He was no longer the religious enthusiast—for he knew the worldly character of the man he had to deal with—but the astute man of the world. They eyed each other for a few moments in silence, as each would measure the fence of the other.

The future Protector of England was the first to speak.

“You say you can render this suspension of hostilities of no effect; how?”

“By causing the king to recommence—before the messenger of the Parliament can reach him.”

“The means—the means!” exclaimed Cromwell, impatiently.

“That is my secret; told, it would be yours.”

This was uttered in a tone so calm and cold that his hearer felt he had to deal with a man who not only knew the value of the service he had it in his power to render, but was resolved to exact it. They understood each other.

“And the price of such a service?”

“An order for the arrest of Sir Malcolm Keinton and his daughter,” replied Barford.

“I have no power.”

“You can move that they be committed to the Gate House in your place in Parliament. The assistance, both in men and plate, which the old knight has given to the king will prove sufficient reason; and the House, in the first burst of terror when they shall hear the cannon of the king, will vote anything, for fear is always cruel.”

“Where are they now?”

“At Wilton House. The renegade has sheltered them.”

“It will offend its owner deeply,” said Cromwell, musingly. “He is much looked up to in the House by a rising party of young men, who must be won or crushed.”

“Your answer?” impatiently demanded Barford.

“Let me but hear within five hours that Charles Stuart has fired one shot against the metropolis of England, and I pledge myself to demand Sir Malcolm Keinton and his daughter’s arrest of the Parliament.”

“Three shall not pass ere it is heard,” exclaimed Barford. “Farewell! This day will decide the fortunes of more names than one.”

Without another word he quitted the room where the conference had taken place, and made his way to the front of Westminster Hall, where his horse was waiting. He mounted it with a quick bound, and galloped, as though the fiend possessed him, towards Brentford.

For some time Cromwell continued to pace the apartment, where he remained alone, buried in deep reflections. It is probable that at this period he first began to entertain those dreams of ambition which sullied the purity of his early character. Perhaps, in his

sleep, he saw the shattered throne filled by a giant form, a broken sceptre and a blood-stained axe lying at its feet. With his usual clear-headed perception, he had seen the advantage of Barford's offer ; his only fear was lest he should be unable to accomplish it. He knew that the City of London, already deeply incensed against the king, and daily excited by the preaching of the Puritans, would never forgive an attack on their time-honoured walls ; the breach must be irreparable.

"Will he attempt it ?" he murmured ; "will he accomplish it ? or hath hate put a boaster's tongue between his lips ? Let him but lead the phantom king to such an error, and not all the secret leaning of the wavering Essex—who is but half the people's friend—can save him ; his cause is lost—lost—lost. But what remains ?" he added slowly, as if afraid to contemplate the answer to the question he had asked. "What prison can hold a crownless king ? what chain fetter the hand which once hath borne the sceptre ? Death—the grave !—no other. God !" he continued, starting as if from a hideous dream, "let not my soul grow weak and womanish—unnerved by childish terrors. What Thou hast decreed, man's weakness cannot change ; the burthen Thou hast lain, Thou givest strength to bear."

On his return to his place in the House, he found that the question, as he expected, had been carried in the affirmative, and Sir Peter Killigrew despatched to require a like concession on the part of the Royalists, not doubting but Charles would consider himself bound, under existing circumstances, to concede the truce.

There was a quiet tone of triumph on the part of those who were known supporters of the Royal cause in the House, and a cold, stern resolution written on the features of the defeated minority, who were men to bide their time.

"Thou hast been absent from the fight, brother," whispered one of the Puritan members, as Cromwell took his seat beside him, "and the battle hath been lost."

"That soldier is not the worse employed who protecteth the retreat ; the Lord may change our discomfort into victory."

During the debate which was carried on, touching the means of raising the supplies, Oliver sat listening in nervous silence for the signal which Barford promised ; still no sound met his ear, and in the impatience of his nature he internally cursed him as a traitor, or an empty boaster who had promised more than he could perform. The House was listening to an harangue of Holles, who had a command in the army of the Commons under Essex ; they were both jealous of the rising influence of the Independents, and wished for an accommodation with the king.

"Why should we doubt the Royal word ?" he added ; "the evil counsellors have been removed. Charles has received a lesson of

the people's strength, and henceforth may be expected to govern in faithfulness and justice. Why doubt his truth?"

There was a pause. Cromwell started from his seat. The distant booming of the cannon was distinctly heard.

"Why doubt his truth!" he repeated bitterly; and his homely features assumed an expression of bitter sarcasm; "let his own acts reply for him. Because taking advantage of the truce, he has advanced his army towards the City while the watchmen sleep; because at this moment he is slaughtering our unsuspecting brethren—staining his soul with the blood of his people—turning his sceptre to a sword. Foolish nation," he added, "when will you be convinced that neither faith nor truth dwell in the breast of the Stuart? Hark!" he continued, as the roll of the artillery became more and more distinct; "we hold counsel when we ought to draw the sword—prate like women when we should do the deeds of men. Did I not believe that a mighty Hand was upon us, and that He whose word is strength would yet guide this unhappy nation as He guided the footsteps of His chosen race of old, I would turn my weapon to a ploughshare, and, in the New World, seek that freedom of conscience which the Commons of England are idly bartering here."

These few words, uttered with unusual vehemence, and the roaring of the cannon now distinctly heard, threw the assembly into confusion. Essex, pale with rage and shame at having been thus trifled with, as he thought, rushed from the House, followed by Holles and many of the members, and, mounting his horse, galloped across the park in the direction of the ominous sound. Many prepared to follow him. Those who had opposed the treating with the king calmly enjoyed their triumph: the Royalists were crestfallen, and, dispirited as they were, hurried from the House.

"Roll on," muttered Cromwell, as he prepared to follow Essex to the field, and the peal of the artillery again fell upon his ear; "it is the knell of thy despotic race, O king!—the signal of the downfall of thy throne. Roll on," he repeated; "the voice of an outraged people shall drown thy mimic thunder. Blindness hath seized him—that mental darkness which fell on the Egyptian king, and led him to his ruin. The day hath dawned—the man will not be wanting."

Prince Rupert, followed by the king in person and the whole of the Royal army, taking advantage of a dense November fog, had advanced towards Brentford, not at first with the intention of attacking it, but to wait in a better position the decision of the Parliament. While debating on their next step, a horseman, covered with foam, dashed up to the Royal tent, and gave to the officer of the guards a letter for the king. It purported to be written by Essex, and advised him to advance immediately on London, and held out a direct promise of favouring the attempt.

As it was known that the general had long been wavering, the unhappy monarch, whose peculiar misfortune it ever was to trust his foes and doubt his friends, gave the word for the attack, and fell into the snare, which broke off all negotiation with the Parliament, and rendered useless the exertions of his partisans.

Rupert fancied that he could carry the town of Brentford by assault without any difficulty ; get on to Hammersmith, where the train of the enemy's artillery lay, and take London by storm. Had the letter been real, and not a forgery of Barford's, there is little doubt but the attempt might have proved successful. But Holles's men opposed their passage so stoutly, that the gallant regiments of Hampden and Lord Brooke had time to come up. These three regiments, not without great loss, completely barred the road ; and when Essex, who had gathered a great force, came up, he found that the Royalists had given over the attack, and lay on the western side of Brentford.

On hearing of the attack, London poured forth its armed citizens. The 'prentices, always a daring class, rushed to the fight as to a holiday. Grave merchants, traders, and even magistrates, together with all the lords and gentlemen belonging to the Parliament forces, hastened to the army. The City bands, under the command of Major-General Sheppon, who enjoyed great popularity in London, marched cheerfully forth, and Essex found himself on the following Sunday at the head of twenty-four thousand men, drawn up in battle array on Turnham Green.

Hampden, with the brave men of Buckinghamshire, began to make a detour with the intention of falling on the king's rear, while the rest of the army should attack him in front, and turn his flank. Scarcely had they marched a mile, when Sir John Merrick, Essex's major-general, galloped after them, and in the general's name ordered them back.

Essex sheltered this extraordinary conduct under the advice of the opinion of his council, composed chiefly of soldiers of fortune, who love protracted war as physicians love lingering diseases—for the gain ; they recommended him to suffer the king to withdraw without a battle.

Charles, scarcely crediting his good fortune, got safe to Kingston, and crossed the bridge there without opposition, and without ammunition enough in his own army to have lasted a quarter of an hour.

Indignant at the weakness or treachery displayed, Hampden dashed his sword upon the ground, exclaiming that his country was betrayed and lost.

Cromwell laid his hand upon his shoulder, and replied, with a grim smile, that a country never could be lost while such sons remained to battle against her tyrant.

A few days afterwards the indignant Parliament voted that they

would never again make treaty or peace with Charles Stuart; and ordered, without a dissentient voice, the arrest of the old knight of Keinton. The service of the treacherous Barford was repaid.

About this time a conspiracy was detected, headed by Waller the poet, who for some time had been in communication with Lord Falkland, the secretary of the king. The main object of it was to seize upon the persons of the leading members of the Commons, and to deliver London to the Royalists. By a devilish contrivance Barford managed to involve the father of Mary in the plot—tried, the accusation was sustained by forgeries similar to the one by which he had deluded Rupert.

The effect was still the same. The prisoners were removed from the Gate House to Guildhall for trial, and, in that age of passion and dissension, condemned.

Herbert was one evening returning from his rounds in Oxford, when the faithful Martin, travel-worn and covered with dust, encountered him. In as few brief words as grief would permit, the faithful fellow told him the dangerous position of his old master and his child, whom the knight found, to his astonishment and terror, were inmates of the Gate House prison. Three hours afterwards, disguised as a couple of private soldiers, they left the city, and made the best of their way to London—the anxious lover determined to save his young heart's treasure, or share her fate. His was that love which knows no second object; but, like the Indian plant, blooms once, and then expires.

Martin had brought a letter from his master; in it he gave directions for the security of his estates to his child if happier times should dawn, and his consent to their immediate marriage. "Conceal," it said, "the knowledge of my fate from my child; I fear her affectionate heart would wither at the stroke. Exile—imprisonment—anything to deceive her. Could I but place her in your arms I should be happy; but use your own discretion. Let not the king, God bless him! lose one of his best defenders to gratify an old man's wish."

Smeaton, one of the servants of the Speaker of the Commons, was known to be an avaricious man; for gold he would have sold his God, had such a deed been possible, and was not likely to hesitate to betray his master. For a stipulated sum he procured a blank order for the release of Mary; and Herbert, armed with the seeming authority, presented himself at the gate. The keeper, a starched Puritan, eyed him suspiciously; but both the lover and the agent through whom he had procured it were too well disguised even for his lynx eye to detect them, and they were conducted to the room where the condemned Royalists were confined previous to their execution. No sooner were they together in the prison than Mary was folded in the eager embrace of her lover, whose companion watched at the door of the cell, lest the governor or any

of his satellites should surprise them. Sir Malcolm first found courage to break silence :

"I am sentenced by these monsters, Herbert, to a long, but, I trust, not cheerless exile. My only anxiety is for my child. Years may elapse ere I again clasp her to my heart. I fear for her alone."

"Not for me, father," exclaimed the affectionate girl through her tears ; "not for me. I can go with you. Exile has for me no terrors, if you share it with me."

The old man smiled. He was happy to see his child so completely deceived as to his real fate.

"It may not be," he said ; "I cannot even name the place of my banishment ; but it will be far, I fear, from thee. Mary," he added, solemnly, "as I have loved thee—watched thy infant years—been a kind, though perchance a foolish, father to thee—as thou wouldst have my parting blessing, comply with my request, and make an old man happy. Let me behold thee in a husband's arms—safe in his love and honour—and I shall be satisfied, even if my doom were death—not banishment. Dr. Maudly," naming an eminent divine, who was one of his fellow captives, and, like himself, imprisoned for his loyalty, "will perform the ceremony."

The reverend captive advanced. So deep was the interest excited in the fate of the fair girl, that all the prisoners agreed in deceiving her as to her parent's fate ; they spoke of banishment, not death. Herbert took her hand, and eloquently entreated her to insure his happiness, and fulfil the wish of her father.

"Do not ask it," she sobbed. "At night, and in this horrid prison—is this a time to speak of marriage ?"

Herbert's companion urged them to decide, fearing the governor of the prison might return.

"Mary," said Sir Malcolm, taking her trembling hand, and gazing with mournful earnestness upon her agitated countenance, "life is uncertain ; those who now rule may send me to some distant country. Severed from every tie which binds my heart to existence, I may drop into the grave before England has recovered of its madness, and Charles again be seated on his throne. Think how it would cheer my lonely heart to know that thou wert safely sheltered in the arms of an adoring husband. Death would lose all its bitterness. Wilt thou refuse me this, perhaps, last request ? or, casting aside the influence of the idle terrors which surround thee here, make the old man happy ? Remember, too," he added, "that every moment of Herbert's stay is fraught with peril to him."

The tone of earnestness with which the appeal was made went to the soul of Mary. Her spirits rose with the occasion, and with a kiss of filial love she whispered acquiescence to his will. Waller and his friends formed a circle round the rude table in their cell, while others kept the door ; and by the light of two candles in

that sad dungeon, Dr. Maudly pronounced the benediction of the Church, and Mary was the wife of Herbert of Stanfield.

The priest, aware of what belonged to his sacred office, even when, as he supposed, upon the threshold of eternity, asked for pens and paper. With a firm hand he wrote the certificate, which all present signed; the poet observing, as he affixed his name, that never could he be more honoured.

"Lady," said the clergyman, "an old man's blessing and a tear of admiration for thy filial heroism will not disgrace thy hand." He raised it respectfully to his lips as he spoke. "I have a duty to perform; the paper I give into your hands concerns the dignity of your life, the estate of your children. Guard it as you would your honour. May happiness attend you."

"Come!" exclaimed Waller with a forced smile, "it shall not be said that the marriage of the heiress of Keinton was celebrated without one cup drained to her happiness. We have wine. A toast, gentlemen and gallants. Honour and happiness to the bride!"

Those who were guarding the door approached to join in the demonstration. A second cup followed—it was to the triumph of King Charles.

"Here's a health to King Charles and his cause,
Here's health to each bold Cavalier;
May the arm that in battle would pause
Lie dishonoured and cold on its bier!"

Sang Waller, with forced mirth. "Exile! why, we shall be the winners. England is no more the land of madrigal and song, but of conventicles and psalms. Huzza! God bless the bride, and restore King Charles!"

At this moment the governor burst open the door of the cell. He had approached unperceived, and unfortunately overheard enough to inform him what had passed.

"So," he exclaimed, sarcastically, "the wolf hath broken into Zion, and the priest of Belial hath profaned the temple!"

"A pretty Zion!" said Waller, looking round the desolate cell.

"I must have further warrant in this matter," continued the functionary, "than this, perhaps worthless, bit of paper. The Lord hath enlightened his servitor, and the scheme of iniquity shall not prevail. My feet shall avoid a snare, and those that dig the pitfall tumble therein."

He was about to advance to the door to summon the gaolers, when Waller, who was a fine, manly fellow, of exceeding strength, sprang upon him, and dragged him into the centre of the room.

"Has anyone a knife?" he exclaimed.

Mary turned aside, and hid her face in the bosom of her husband.

"Hold!" said Challoner, who was afterwards executed for his share in the conspiracy; "do not shed his blood; I know a surer

way to punish him. Where," he added, addressing the prostrate hypocrite, "is the dungeon of Williams? Speak, or your time is short!"

"The third to the left," he gasped.

"'Tis well," said his interrogator; "you shall share it with him. You best know what claim you have to his mercy."

Goaded with horror at the idea, the villain struggled: they succeeded at last in binding him.

"May you not all escape?" exclaimed Herbert, a dawn of hope breaking on his mind.

"No," replied Waller, gallantly; "the attempt would but endanger yours. You forget the guard at the entrance of the prison."

Despite his blasphemous calls to God for assistance, his frantic entreaties for mercy, they forced him from the cell and conducted him to the one he had described. The ponderous bar was hastily withdrawn, and the helpless gaoler thrust into the same dungeon as his prisoner. Challoner smiled significantly as he closed the door.

"Who is this Williams?" demanded Herbert, as they accompanied himself and bride to the end of the passage, after Mary had taken an agonising leave of her father, who had blessed her with a parent's blessing, and imprinted a hundred kisses upon her pale cheek, deeming each one the last.

"A former keeper of the prison. The wretch who succeeded him first seduced his wife and then denounced his superior as a Royalist. Under the garb of religion he has committed more crimes than would damn a hundred infidels. Would you believe it, he and his wretched paramour have been in the habit daily of visiting their victim till they have driven him frantic: he is now a raving maniac."

Mary, who heard the words, shuddered when she thought what would be the wretch's fate. The bride and bridegroom, attended by their trusty guide, passed on, and in a few minutes were in the street, where the faithful Martin was waiting to receive them. Throwing a hood and cloak of the simplest fashion, such as were worn by the poorer citizens' wives, over the form of his trembling wife, Herbert conducted her to the house of a friend, in whom, although a Puritan, he felt he could confide—the house of the young Master of Wilton.

The Cavaliers, reckless of the doom which hung suspended over them, retired to the cell of the madman Williams, to witness the sport, as they termed it, of the prisoners' meeting. The terrible was strangely mixed with it.

A scream of suppressed pleasure reached their ears as they approached the grated door.

"Pinned for a hundred!" exclaimed Waller, in the language of the bull-ring.

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